Central American NEWSLETTER

Newsletter of the Central American Group of the Spanish Main Society.

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PRESIDENTIAL MESSAGE

NICARAGUA made a LARGE GOLD at ITALIA '85; our sincere congratulations to the owner of this magnificent collection, Kilian Nathan of Zurich. This great achievement effectively puts paid to those "doubting Thomases" who have in the past said Nicaragua was not a "large gold country".

Congratulations also to our member in Denmark, Finn Stjernholck, who gained a Gold medal at the BOSTON Philatelic Show '85 for his postal stationery of Costa Rica; Finn was also awarded the US Stationery reserve award as runner up in the annual Marcus White Showcase.

Another of our members well to the fore is Clyde Maxwell of California who was awarded a Vermeil medal at the San Diego StampShow for his "Airmails of Nicaragua 1929-1937"; he was also awarded the American Philatelic Society award of Excellence for collections between 1900 and 1940.

We look forward to articles on their respective subjects from Finn and from Clyde for future publication!

Important future Spanish Main meetings include the Spanish Main Cup to be held on 14th December at the Victory Services Club, Marble Arch, London W2, and the revival of our out of town meetings in April 1986 when a Spanish Main meeting has been planned by our Editor at the Conservative Club, Urmston, Manchester for 5th April. Members planning to attend are asked to contact Mike Birks if they have not already done so.

Volume I of the Central American Newsletters has been reprinted and all 20 numbers are still available as one volume unit at a cost of £10 or US $15 post free - 192 pages full of useful and interesting information - a few copies are still available, order with your remittance from our Editor, address as above.

We are starting to make plans for our Central American Group meeting planned for 17 May 1986 at the Victory Services Club. We hope to enjoy many displays of Central American material and that other Spanish Main members might be converted to try one of our countries.

Finally a very happy Christmas to you all and good collecting in 1986.

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Devon
TQ12 1JX
England

John Fosbery
President, Spanish Main

Members whose subscriptions are due will find their address labels marked with an "X". Prompt payment will ensure an unbroken run of your Newsletter. - MPB

THE 1935 CONTROL MARKINGS OF NICARAGUA by L J HARRIS

The Gibbons and Scott catalogues refer briefly to these stamps. The following is the text of Scott's note which appears in the airmail section of the Nicaragua listing:-

> "The editors do not recognise the Nicaraguan air post stamps overprinted in red "VALIDO 1935" in two lines and with or without script control marks as having been issued primarily for postal purposes."

During the evening of November 16, 1935, the Nicaraguan sub-treasury at Campo de Marte was robbed of approximately 80,000 Cordoba's worth of stamps and stamped envelopes. At the time, the Cordoba and the Dollar were roughly equivalent in value. To prevent the fraudulent resale of these stolen stamps, President Sacasa issued Decree No. 60, dated November 22, 1935. This Decree required that a rectangular medallion control marking, with the text "RESELLO 1935" be overprinted on all stamps in order to make them valid (figure 1).

In the roughly two-week interim, before the newly overprinted stamps were made available for sale, postal employees throughout the country were apparently instructed to initial or sign each and every stamp which they sold to the public. The initials or signatures were applied manually or, in a few instances, by handstamp, and covers are known bearing these initialled stamps.

The initialing or signing of all stamps sold was obviously time-consuming. One Señor Rafael Gonzalez, the official at that time in charge of the airmail section of the Managua post office, apparently took upon himself to make a handstamp with the two line "VALIDO/1935" text (figure 2) which for a short time he applied to the stock of 15 centavo (SG 629, Scott C18) or 25 centavo (SG 631, Scott C4) stamps under his control.

Resello

1935

figure 1

VALIDO

1935

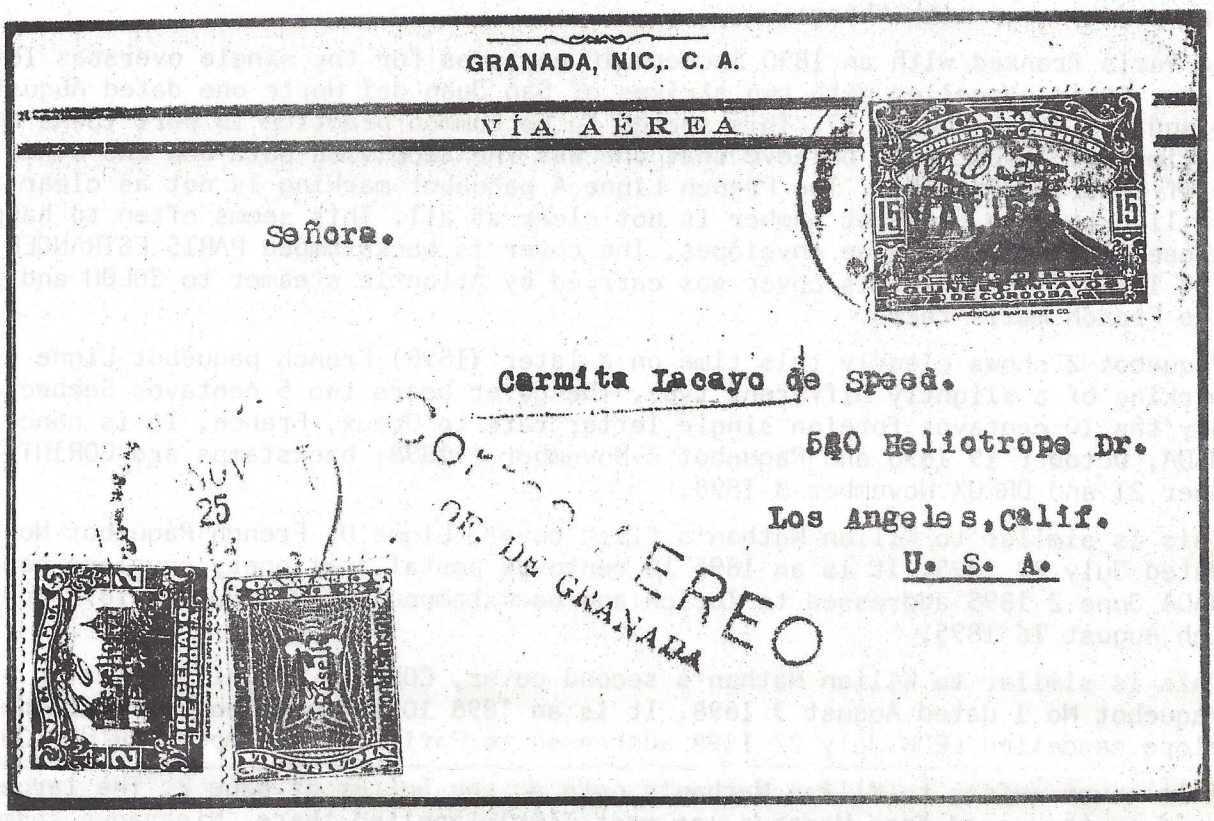
figure 2

Since all airmail from outlying Nicaraguan post offices which was destined to the exterior also came through the airmail section of Señor Gonzalez, the handstamp was perhaps also applied to such stamps already on cover. Commercial covers with these two overprinted stamps are known used from the towns of Granada, Chinandega, Corinto and Leon, in addition to Managua.

When these curiously overprinted stamps on cover reached the United States and Europe, orders for the stamps were promptly sent to Managua. None were supplied, however, owing to the clearly provisional nature of the control marking and the lack of any formal Governmental authorization for its usage.

Unfortunately, whenever there is a demand for philateluc products, that demand is usually met, somehow and by somebody. Shortly after its usage was terminated, the handstamp, or perhaps a copy of it, fell into the wrong hands and was promptly applied to a wide variety of other airmail stamps. Fortunately most of these overprinted stamps are mint, and as none were officially sold in excess of current needs, it is therefore easy to detect their forged or bogus status. In addition, many carry the hallmark on the reverse side of one Señor Orlando Marin Aviles. This individual, among others, was indicted and tried during the 1950's in Nicaragua for philatelic forgery. Such stamps known with the forged "VALIDO/1935" (or at best, purloined) handstamp include SG 799-805, 814-5, Scott C92-98, C110-111, and SG 0826-30, Scott C010-14. On the other hand, as stated previously, the genuine use of the handstamp was apparently only upon SG 631 and 629, Scott C4 and C18

One of the more imaginative forgeries of Señor Martin include the use on cover of stamps having both the letter "I" missing from the word "VALIDO", and a mirror image of the very same handstamp.



A cover from Granada postmarked November 25, 1935, to Managua, which arrived two days later. The two lower stamps are overprinted with figure 1, and the upper airmail stamp with figure 2. All three stamps have been initialled.

Readers with examples on cover are invited to write, via the editor, enclosing photocopies if possible.

References

1. Scott Standard Postage Stamp Catalogue, Vol 3, p 1031.
2. Correspondence between the author and Mr Kilian E Nathan of Zurich, Switzerland.
3. Richard N Cone, "Nicaragua - The End of a Fraud", Aero Philatelist Annals, October, 1953, p 39.

RUBEN DARIO

Derek Palmer reminds us that Chile also issued a commemorative stamp in the memory of Ruben Dario; his book titled "Azul" shown on the stamp was published in 1888, when the poet was living in Valparaiso. It was engraved by José Moreno, engraver of the Chilean Mint; he also engraved a larger portrait of Dario which was printed by the Chilean Mint on the occasion of his centennial.

NICARAGUAN PAQUEBOT MARKINGS by HENRY MADDEN

I was interested in Kilian Nathan's write up on these on page 16 of the September Newsletter. French Paquebot markings of this area are scarce and his cover with the Purser oval of S S Colon is a beauty. I have checked over my collection of Seebeck covers and come up with these:-

A To Paris franked with an 1890 Seebeck 10 centavos for the single overseas letter rate, it is cancelled with two strikes of San Juan del Norte one dated August 16 1890 and the other August 17. This seemed to be common practice in port towns at that time and leads me to believe that one was the receiving date and the other the date of departure by ship. The French Ligne A paquebot marking is not as clear as I would like and the paquebot number is not clear at all. This seems often to happen on these old time dark blue envelopes. The cover is backstamped PARIS ESTRANGER Sep 24 1890. I imagine this cover was carried by Atlantic steamer to COLON and placed in the French mails there.

B Paquebot 2 shows clearly this time on a later (1898) French paquebot Ligne A marking of a slightly different type. The cover bears two 5 centavos Seebecks to prepay the 10 centavos foreign single letter rate to Dreux, France. It is cancelled GRANADA, October 19 1898 and Paquebot 2 November 2 1898; backstamps are CORINTO October 21 and DREUX November 3 1898.

C This is similar to Kilian Nathan's first cover, Ligne D, French Paquebot No 1, dated July 22 1895. It is an 1895 10 centavos postal stationery envelope cancelled GRANADA June 2 1895 addressed to Zurich and backstamped CORINTO June 3 1895 and Zurich August 16 1895.

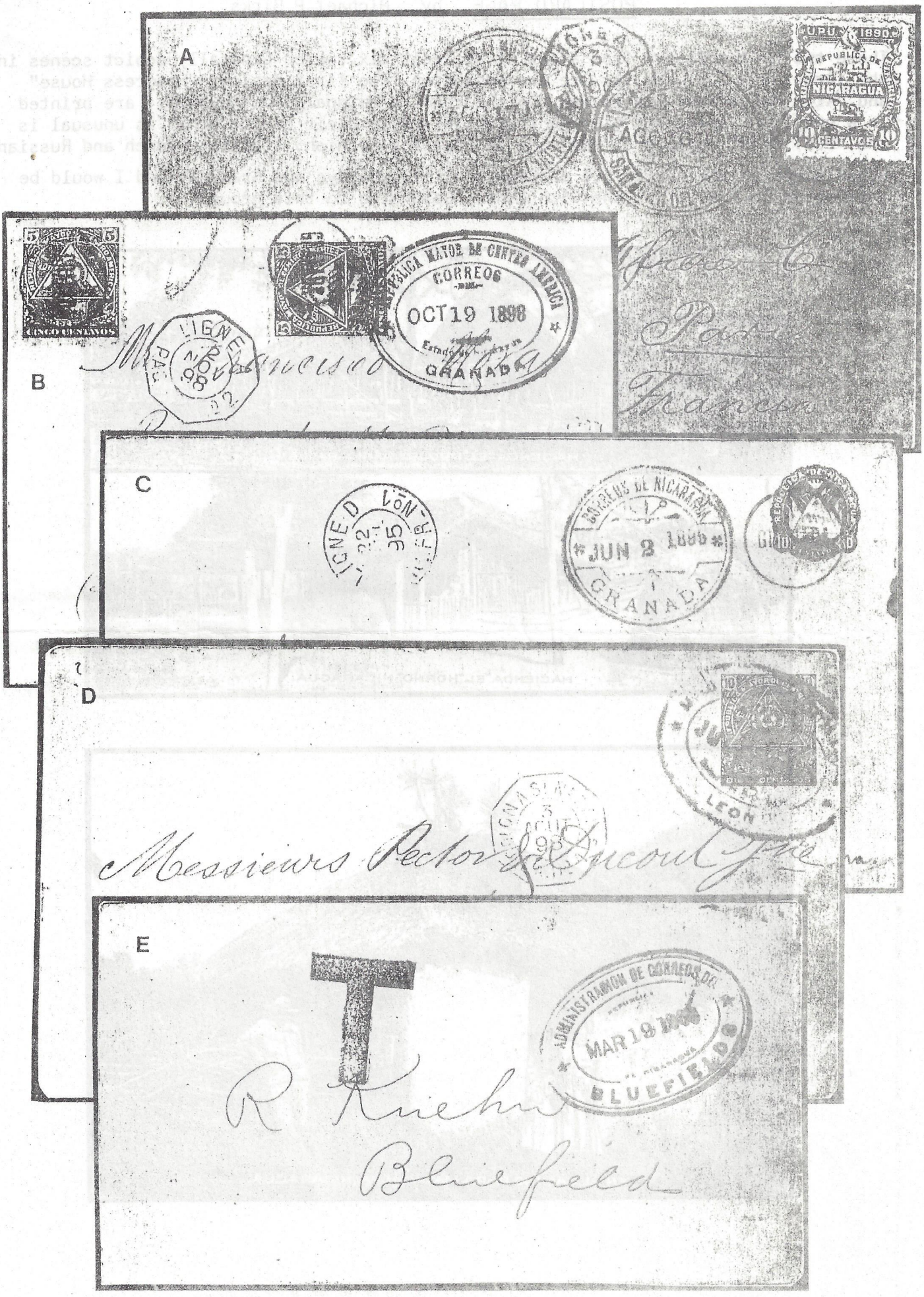
D This is similar to Kilian Nathan's second cover, COLON a ST NAZAIRE but is Ligne A Paquebot No 1 dated August 3 1898. It is an 1898 10 centavos postal stationery envelope cancelled LEON July 22 1898 addressed to Paris, backstamped CORINTO July 23.

E This cover refers to Kilian Nathan's note at the bottom of page 2. The large "T" used on the cover from Managua was most likely applied there. Nicaragua seems to like the "T" on a grand scale. My illustrated large purple "T" comes from Bluefields, date March 19 1900 and is also similar in size to the Managua "T", but mine has no serifs.

COSTA RICA: POSTAL RATES 1883-c1940

In my article on this subject on page 6 of our last Newsletter I suggested that in 1883 the registration service was available gratis for domestic letters. This statement is incorrect. Our Californian member Dr Heinz A von Hungen puts me straight and sends photostats of tariff rates from a book "Era de Oro de la Filatelia Costa Ricense 1863-1903" by Dr Carlos Saenz, published in San Jose. From this it would appear that in the last decade of the XIXth century registration was available for domestic mails at 25 ctvos or at 35 ctvos for registration with the AR service. As Dr von Hungen so rightly points out registration domestically was more expensive than for the foreign (UPU) rate which was 10 ctvos registration or 15 ctvos if the AR service was to be included. The reason that the foreign rate was so low was that it was reduced to conform with UPU regulations whereas the earlier domestic rate remained in force creating the apparent anomaly.

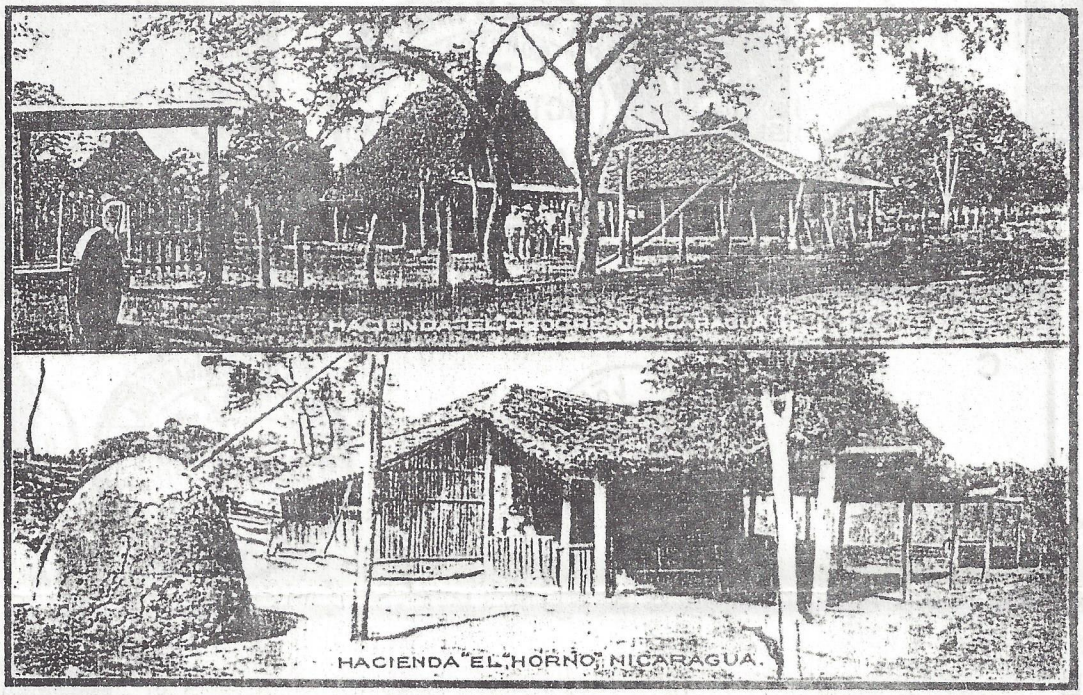
R.H.S.


A
UPU 1890
REPUBLICA DE NICARAGUA
10 CENTAVOS
B
CINCO CENTAVOS
REPUBLICA MAYOR DE CENTRO AMERICA
CORREOS
OCT 19 1898
GRANADA
C
CORREOS DE NICARAGUA
JUN 2 1898
GRANADA
D
LEON
E
ADMINISTRACION DE CORREOS DE
MAR 19
BLUEFIELDS

POSTCARD PAGE by Michael P Birks

These two postcards are from a set of at least six, which generally depict scenes in the larger towns. These two are the exception. The first depicts "Progress House" and "Kiln House" and the second "On the road to Matagalpa". The cards, are printed in a purplish sepia, and give no indication as to their source. What is unusual is the "POST CARD" appears on the back in English, Spanish, Italian, French and Russian.

Other cards in the series are of Leon, Corinto, Masaya and Granada, and I would be interested to hear of anyone with others belonging to this group.



NICARAGUA: THE CENTENARY OF INDEPENDENCE SET

Further to Michael Birks' article on page 5 of our last issue, Kilian Nathan sends us a copy of the decree signed in Managua by Emiliano Chamorro and his Minister of Production Juan Zavala on 10th and 11th November 1920. This orders 100,000 each of the seven values in the set to be printed and issued for use on 14, 15 and 16 of September 1921. Kilian Nathan also sends a cover dated May 1922 from Rama to San Francisco franked with a strip of 5 of the 2c value. Covers are rare and clearly it would seem that use of these stamps other than on the specific days decreed was accepted but the dates of use laid down in the decree seem to clear up the first day of issue in Stanley Gibbons Catalogue (it should be the 14th September and also the slight difference of 15 September as quoted by Stanley Daft).

In a decree dated 27 June stamps of this set were to be overprinted "R. de C./Vale/ Un Centavo" (SG 474-78, Scott RA12-16) as under:-

9,500	1 centavo			20,700	10 centavos
28,300	25 centavos	13,700	5 centavos	28,700	50 centavos

Finally there was a further decree of the same date, 27 June 1922, that the rest of the original issue should be burnt and the numbers to be destroyed are listed as:-

		4,092	1 centavo		
28,337	½ centavo			5,529	2 centavos
		5,313	5 centavos		
912	10 centavos			316	50 centavos
		642	25 centavos		

COMMENTS ON THE 1948 COSTA RICA COVERS (CAN No. 21 Page 3)

George McCarty has suggested that my article concerning the 1948 revolution covers was a mis-representation of the underlying political situation. George, a resident of Costa Rica, suggests that Dr Calderon was not the bete-noir I described but was a liberal minded politician responsible amongst other things for introducing the Costa Rican system of human rights and the social security system. He goes on to question my source material; this was:-

1) "Area Handbook for Costa Rica" (1970), US Government Printing Office, Wash DC.

2) The 1980 Edition of Fodor's Guide to Central America.

3) "Costa Rica - The Unarmed Democracy" (1984) by Leonard Bird. Sheppard Press Ltd, London.

These comments highlight the great problem faced by anyone endeavouring to research one of the smaller foreign countries.

RHS

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Secretary: Brian Moorhouse, PO Box 3, BOURNE PE10 9RF, UK

The society also runs two specialised groups, the Central American and the Chile groups. The subscription to each group is £3 (UK) or $7 elsewhere, to Spanish Main members, or $10 to non-members (Overseas subscriptions only). This includes four copies of the respective Newsletter, by airmail.

YUCATANA REGIO ET HONDURA

"Descriptionis Ptolemaicae Augmentum" was compiled by Cornelis van Wytfliet and published by Jan Bogaert at Louvain in 1597. The "Descriptionis" contains 19 maps soley devoted to the Americas and thus merits its description as the first atlas of the New World. The plan was to supplement Ptolemy's "Cosmographia" by a description of those parts of the world revealed by contemporary discovery and thus unknown to the Alexandrian geographer. Wytfliet planned to complete his work with an account of discoveries elsewhere but nothing was published and it is presumed his death overtook his intentions.

At the date of publication regional maps of America existed in the "Theatrum" of Ortelius and in De Jode's "Speculum"; basic cartographic information also existed in the large world maps of Mercator and Plancius, information supplemented by the maps in De Bry's "America" (1590-1596). Wytfliet's work was largely a professional "paste-up" and he seems to have leant heavily on Ramusio's "Navigationi" as well as having carefully consulted other available sources at his disposal.

The following pages show Wytfliet's interpretation of Central America (IVCATANA ET FONDURA) as well as a facsimile of the relevant text; the text has been translated by Michael Birks and Mrs Elizabeth McPherson BA.

The reproductions are presented with the kind permission of the publishers, Nico Israel of Amsterdam; they are excerpts from No V in their series of facsimiles of atlases, "Theatrum Orbis Terrarum".

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The map seems to include details probably gleaned from the fourth and last voyage of Christopher Columbus, the only one in which he reached the coast of Central America. For this voyage Columbus left Cadiz on 9 May 1502 with the Caravels "La Capiana", the "Santiago", "La Gallego" and the "Viscayno". After being battered by a hurricane at the end of June, the first unknown land that was sighted was Guanaja, one of the Bay Islands in the Gulf of Honduras. Columbus then sailed east upwind and is recorded as having rounded Cabo Gracias a Dios on 14 September, anchoring at Rio de los Disastres (the Rio Grande or Bluefields in modern Nicaragua) on 16 September. He is recorded as being at La Huerta or Cariai (Puerto Limon in modern Costa Rica) from 25 September to 4 October whence he was off looking for gold in Veragua. The rest of this voyage was a pretty good disaster, Columbus eventually reaching Spain in November 1504 in a hired Caravel, having lost his entire small fleet of four vessels with which he started out.

JALF

US TRADE EMBARGO HALTS IMPORT OF NICARAGUAN NEW ISSUES by M P BIRKS

I think it is a great shame when political considerations affect our hobby. The recent trade embargo on goods from Nicaragua into the US has also been applied to stamps of that country. In fact since all the stamps of Nicaragua issued since May 1981 have been printed in Cuba, they were already subject to the regulations regarding the importation of Cuban goods under the Cuban Assets Control Regulations, but the regulations were apparently never applied to stamps. All that has changed since May 6. Importing stamps through the mails is prohibited, whether mint or used.

It is easy to justify the ban, since the revenue from mint and cancelled-to-order stamps must form a significant source of income to the junta. What is a shame, is that properly used stamps will also fall under the ban, since one can hardly expect customs officers to distinguish between cto and commercially used.

PTOLOMAICÆ AVGMENTVM.

NIcaragua a Septentrione Fondurâ clauditur, in meridie inferi ſiue pacifici maris vndis alluitur, ab ortu ſeptentrionalis oceani fluctibus pulſatur. Regio populoſa ingentibuſque arboribus perquam amœna, ſed quæ ab aëris potius ſalubritate, quâ diuite metallorũ venâ cómendetur. Caput gentis eſt Legio & Granata, has Colonias Franciſcus Ferdinãdi deduxit.

line 7 In medio regionis ingẽs lacus cõſpicitur, multis vrbibus frequẽs, cuius initium vix octo aut decem paſſuum millibus abeſt ab occiduo ſeu infero mari, paulatimque verſus ortum ſeſe protendens, in ingentem lacum multis inſulis habitatum concreſcit, ripis deinde concluſus in mare ſeptentrionale effunditur, ſed ad in-

12 ſtar maris Oceani æſtuans, creſcit atque decreſcit. Mare hic impetuoſum eſt, mõſtriſque marinis infeſtum, quæ cum vmbilico tenus extant, altiſsimarum nauium antennas æquant aut ſuperant.

15 Incolæ albi potiùs, quàm ærei coloris ſunt, capillos & barbam abradunt, corpus expilant, cirro tantum capillitio in vertice re-

17 tento, faciem fiſſuris deturpant. Fures raſos expilatoſque, ei cui furto nocitum eſt, in ſeruitutem dedunt, deditus, niſi mox ſeſe redimat, idolis immolandus hoſtia ducitur: nam & hic humanis hoſtijs litant, bellorumque in iſtis partibus vnica penè cauſa eſt,

21 captiuorum conquiſitio in regni expiatiõnem. De antiquis Nicaraguenſium conſuetudinibus, nihil attinet dicere, quando erectis paſsim cathedralibus eccleſijs, Chriſtianam religionem ſuſ-

24 ceperint. Ipſe rex Nicaragua (a quo prouinciæ nomen manſit) cum vxore & liberis vniuerſâque aulâ, ac plus quam IX. M. ſub-

26 ditis, vno tempore ſacro baptiſmatis fonte, abluti ſunt. Hoc tamen memorabile apud Nicaraguos inueni, quod duplici olim ſacrificorum ordine, ſuperſtitiones ſuas peragebant, quorum vnus ſacrificiorum ſuperſtitioni, alter confitentium expiationi miro ſilentio operam dabat: referaſſe aut protuliſſe aliquid ex audi-

31 tis detectiſque peccatis, piaculũ ducebant morte puniendum. A receptâ fide Catholicâ nihil grauius tulêre, quam veteſtum & receptũ ſacrificiorũ moré aboleri, ſublatis quippe humanis hoſtijs, omné penitus belli cauſam ſublatã, elãgueſcenteque animi robore, arma ſua rubigine obduci, & bellatrices manus aratro alligari, querebantur.

285
290
Ys. de Arena
Ys. de Negras
GOLFO DE MEXICO.
Laques
Atalia
Salamanque
Campeche
R. de Lagarto
Triangulo
Seuilla
20
La Sacra
Golfo triste
Merida
Champaton
S. Juan de Lisa
Tocstepec
Cumata
Quaza
Iqualco
Tauasco
Xicalanca
HISPA. NOVÆ SIVE MEXIC.
PROVINCIÆ PARS.
Casia
Chetemal
P. de Higuera
P. de Castillo
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Vilaltan
Nacendelan
Guatimala
R. Grande
FONDVRA.
Tapaian
Malince
Masaia
Namasi
Nicaragua
Golfo de Papagallo
Segouia
Naco
Porto de velas
Chira
Leon
CA-
Recileio
10
Pori
Granata
C. Blanco
at. S. Lucar
C. S. Maria
Nicoia
P. S. Lazaro
MARE INFERVM SIVE
OCCIDVVM alijs DEL SVR.
Ys. de Cano
S. Cruz
Ys. de Cocos
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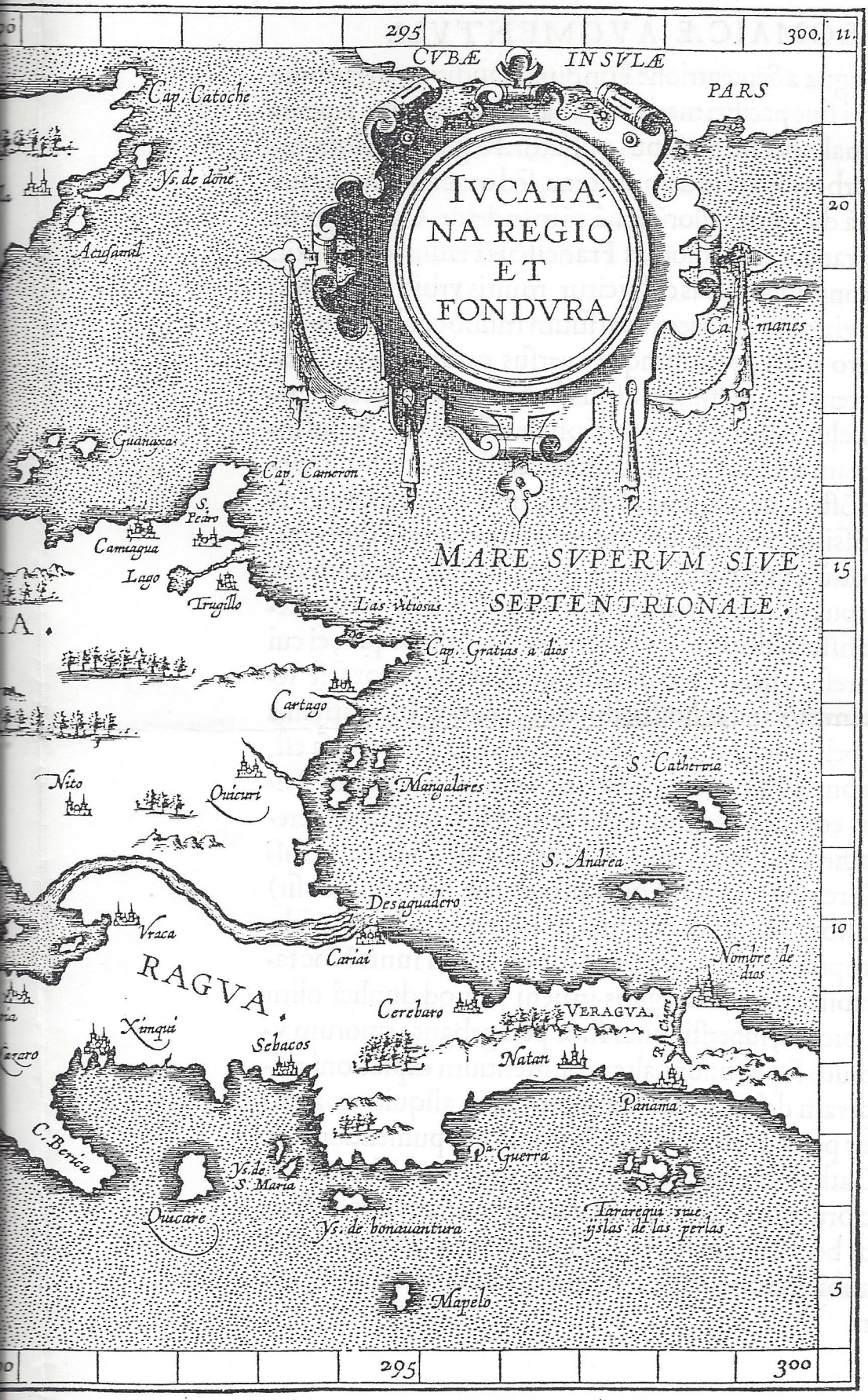
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300.
11.
CVBÆ INSVLÆ PARS
IVCATA-
NA REGIO
ET
FONDVRA
Cap. Catoche
Ys. de done
Acusamil
Ca manes
Guanaxa
Cap. Cameron
S.
Pearo
Camagua
Lago
Trugillo
Las Vtiosas
MARE SVPERVM SIVE
SEPTENTRIONALE.
Cap. Gratias a dios
Cartago
S. Catherina
Nito
Quicuri
Mangalares
S. Andrea
Desaguadero
Vraca
Cariai
Nombre de
dios
RAGVA.
Cerebaro
VERAGVA.
Xanqui
Sebacos
Natan
Panama
C. Bertio
Ys. de
S. Maria
Pa Guerra
Quicare
Ys. de bonauantura
Tararequi siue
yslas de las perlas
Mapelo
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PTOLOMAICAE AUGMENTUM

Nicaragua is enclosed from the north by Honduras, in the south it is washed by the waves of the lower or Pacific sea, on the east it is beaten by the waves of the northern ocean. The region is populated and is particularly pleasant with huge trees, but it is praised rather for its healthy climate than for its rich vein of metals. The main towns are Leon and Granada, Francisco Hernandez established these colonies.

line 7 In the middle of the region a great lake is seen, dotted round with many cities, its start is scarcely eight or ten miles away from the western or lower sea, and stretching gradually to the east, it grows into a vast lake with many islands in it, then closed in by its banks it discharges into the northern sea, but swelling like the ocean it ebbs and flows.

12 This sea is stormy and full of marine monsters which when they stretch out as far as their navel, tower above the spars of very tall ships.

15 The inhabitants are white rather than of a bronze colour, they shave their hair and beard, they remove body hair, only a curl of hair on the top of their head being retained, they disfigure their face with lines cut in.

17 Thieves are shaved and stripped of body hair and given in servitude to the person who has been harmed by the theft, the person handed over is led out as a victim to be sacrificed to idols, unless he redeems himself quickly, for here they offer human victims and almost the only cause of war in these parts is the capture of captives for the expiation of the realm.

21 Concerning the ancient customs of the people of Nicaragua, there is nothing to say since after cathedral churches have been built in various places, they will have adopted the Christian religion.

24 The king of Nicaragua (after whom the province is named) with his wife and children and all his court and more than nine thousand subjects were baptised on the one occasion in the sacred water of baptism.

27 However, I found this worthy of note among the Nicaraguans, that formerly they carried out their superstitious rites in a twofold order of sacrifices in which one person attended to the rite of sacrifices and another in wondering silence attended to the atonement of those confessing, when they revealed or made public any of the heard and uncovered sins they led out a victim to be punished by death.

31 Having received the Catholic faith they complained that they had nothing more difficult to endure than that the old accepted customs of sacrifices are abolished, the human victims even being removed and almost every cause of war removed, and strength of spirit languishing, their arms are left to rust and their warrior hands are tied to the plough.